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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 COLOMBO 000735

SIPDIS

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E.O. 12958: DECL: 04-30-13

TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PTER](#) [PINS](#) [PHUM](#) [CE](#) [LTTE](#)

SUBJECT: Reports steadily mount that Tigers are assassinating Tamil opponents

Refs: Colombo 728, and previous

(U) Classified by Lewis Amselem, Deputy Chief of Mission. Reasons 1.5 (b, d)

1. (C) SUMMARY: Reports are steadily mounting that the Tigers are assassinating Tamil opponents, especially military informants and those in anti-Tiger political parties. The government has been slow in investigating the cases, but has recently formed a commission to look into the matter. While the Tigers have killed many opponents in the past, the latest attacks seem to have shattered a peace process-induced lull. END SUMMARY.

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Alleged Killings by Tigers  
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2. (C) Reports are steadily mounting that the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) are assassinating Tamil opponents. The slayings seem to break down distinctly into two sorts of victims: Tamil informants working for the military and Tamils working for anti-LTTE political parties.

3. (C) With respect to the informants, there have been two particularly high-profile incidents that have recently taken place in the greater Colombo area. In the latest, a Tamil informant working for the Sri Lanka Army (SLA) was gunned down in the greater Colombo area city of Dehiwala on April 26. The victim was killed just after meeting with his SLA handlers. Witnesses recall seeing a three-wheel taxi roar away right after the shots were fired. A Tamil informant was also killed on March 18 in Mount Lavinia, another city located immediately south of Colombo. No one has been arrested in either of these killings (see below). Aside from these headline-grabbing incidents, there have been a handful of other cases in recent months of Tamil military informants (some former, some current) being killed in northern and eastern Sri Lanka.

4. (C) In terms of Tamil political opponents, the LTTE is apparently targeting members of the Eelam People's Democratic Party (EPDP) and the Tamil Eelam Liberation Organization (TELO), two pro-government, anti-LTTE former paramilitary groups. Two prominent EPDP figures, for example, were killed in April in the east by pistol shots fired at close range. One of the EPDP members killed was an elected official, a councilman for a local body in Batticaloa District. TELO members have also been victims of armed attacks, with at least three to four slain in the north and east in past weeks.

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GSL Slow on the Uptake  
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5. (C) In investigating what has happened, the government has been slow on the uptake, and, as far as Mission is aware, only three people have been arrested in connection with all the killings, and they were soon released. In explaining the GSL's apparent inaction re the killings, contacts have told us that it is very difficult to probe killings in the Tamil community. Many Tamils, fearing LTTE retribution, simply refuse to speak to the police, for example. Following the most recent incident in the Colombo area, however, the Prime Minister -- reacting to a firestorm of public protest over the attack -- announced that a commission was being set up to investigate the killings of SLA informants. The commission is tasked with reporting on what is transpiring and who might be to blame in short order.

6. (C) ((Note: Not surprisingly, the LTTE is not admitting to the killings. Pro-LTTE Tamils, in fact, have told us that they believe the killings could well be a "conspiracy" by the GSL and anti-LTTE Tamils to discredit the LTTE. All that said, however, contacts have pointed out that a LTTE official reportedly made a statement recently to the effect that "traitors must

die." This statement reportedly has acted a spur to LTTE cadre to perform such killings. End Note.)))

17. (C) (((Note: One question that has deeply disturbed the government and military is how the LTTE might be learning the identities of GSL informants in the Tamil community. In answering this question, observers are placing the spotlight on a raid by the police on a SLA safehouse near Colombo in December 2001. At the time, the raid, which pitted the police versus the army, was a cause celebre example of two parts of government failing to liaison and work together. Only later did it turn out that information on SLA informants found in the raid had apparently fallen into the hands of the LTTE, which has allegedly been using the information to bump off opponents. Even more remarkably, some of this information reportedly had to do with the super-sensitive "deep reconnaissance patrols" that were developed to target LTTE leaders. End Note.)))

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COMMENT  
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18. (C) While the Tigers have killed many opponents in the past, the latest killings seem to have shattered a peace process-induced lull. Given the lack of clear evidence and the lack of arrests, however, it is difficult to prove Tiger involvement, but all signs point in that direction. After weeks of seemingly ignoring the growing problem, it is illustrative of the importance of proximity that it was only the killings that occurred near the capital of Colombo that stirred the government to look at the matter further. END COMMENT.

19. (U) Minimize considered.

WILLS